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Description

This invention relates to a method of converting predefined areas of semiconductor material on a support means into single crystal areas comprising the steps of heating each area with an optical energy source so as to melt the semiconductor material, and allowing the molten semiconductor material to cool and crystallise.

Semiconductor devices are conventionally fabricated upon wafers of monocrystalline semiconductor material. It is well known that formation of these wafers is severely size limited, as they comprise transverse slices of an elongated single crystal ingot (boule). Silicon boules of only three to four inches in diameter are presently commonly available. Elimination of the wafer as the starting material for subsequent device fabrication, in favour of a single crystal film, or single crystalline areas within a film of a size sufficiently large to be usable, grown non-epitaxially upon a suitable substrate, such as glass, could revolutionize semiconductor technology. A reliably low cost method for formation of large area arrays of active electronic elements with switching and addressing capabilities on a page-size monolithic substrate has long been sought. Such a non-epitaxial method could provide the medium for fabrication of large area displays and contribute to a three-dimensional integrated circuit technology.

An alternative to growing and processing the single crystal silicon boules is the conversion of polycrystalline silicon to single crystalline form by annealing and regrowth upon an insulating substrate. At present silicon-on-sapphire (SOS) technology is essentially the only commercial technique for producing crystalline semiconducting films on insulating substrates. This is an epitaxial growth process which requires a single crystalline substrate whose crystal lattice surface pattern acts as a kind of atomic template for the crystal growth of the overlayer film. However, this process would not be satisfactory for large area integration because the overall size of the SOS film is generally about three inches in diameter, as limited by the sapphire boule. Furthermore, the single crystal semiconductor material has not been of sufficiently high electronic grade. Secondly, the experimental process termed graphoepitaxy (see C & EN July 16, 1979) was developed as an alternative to SOS for converting large areas of amorphous silicon into a single crystalline film on readily available amorphous substrates. Since no regular atomic "template" is present in the amorphous substrate, it has been mimicked by a lithographically etched artificial grating or "template", having the right periodicity and profile. Repeated laser scanning anneals the film and converts it to crystalline material whose orientation is controlled by the grating direction.

A simple method for directly converting amorphous or polycrystalline material, disposed upon a suitable substrate, into usable monocrystals has been reported as far back as 1971. In

U.S. 3,585,088 to Schwuttke et al a method is taught wherein such a film is deposited upon an amorphous substrate and is then selectively bombarded with a pulsed laser beam. By properly adjusting the beam, crystallization of the irradiated area takes place without vaporization of the film. As shown in Figure 3 of that patent, the irradiated region may yield a series of monocrystals within the film. Also in 1971, U.S. 3,600,237 to Davi et al shows an attempt to increase the usable area of a recrystallized semiconductor film (InSb) disposed upon a suitable amorphous substrate, such as glass. Davis et al teach electron beam zone melting of the InSb film and the elimination of spurious nucleation at the edges of the parallel crystal zone by means of scribe lines passing through the film for confining nucleation to a crystal front emanating from a single seed. Electron bombardment heats all irradiated portions of the sample (film and substrate) indiscriminately, and Davis et al do not teach selectively heating certain regions by controlling the thermal input to the sample.

More recently, investigations have lead to annealing predefined islands of polycrystalline silicon on suitable substrates, such as glass, for converting them to single crystal islands. Since islands may be created at known locations, it will be easy to perform subsequent repeated process functions necessary to fabricate usable active devices thereon. Single crystals with a minimum dimension of about $20\text{ }\mu\text{m} \times 20\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ are sought. An island array is significantly more desirable than randomly located large area single crystals which may be produced by the method suggested by Schwuttke et al wherein there is a high probability that semiconductor active devices will bridge grain boundaries rather than being confined to the crystalline area. Gibbons et al teach in Applied Physics Letters 34(12) June 15, 1979 (pp. 831—833), depositing island arrays of polycrystalline silicon material supported upon a silicon nitride layer disposed upon a crystalline silicon substrate investigating the convertibility of these islands into single crystalline form by laser annealing. Of the photolithography defined islands ranging in size from $2\text{ }\mu\text{m} \times 20\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ to $20\text{ }\mu\text{m} \times 160\text{ }\mu\text{m}$, only the small $2\text{ }\mu\text{m} \times 20\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ islands were completely recrystallized and showed an absence of fine grain or amorphous structure after laser annealing. The larger islands included large polycrystalline grains arranged in a chevron pattern pointing in the direction of the laser scan. This evidences competing nucleation points. It should be further noted, however, that the $2\text{ }\mu\text{m} \times 20\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ islands thus achieved, were no larger than randomly located crystalline regions Gibbons et al were able to obtain in a continuous film. Thus, there is no teaching which suggests how useable large area single crystalline islands may be formed nor, more importantly, that delineation of islands is facilitative in producing crystalline regions which are larger than can be produced in continuous films.

It would be highly desirable to provide a reli-

able method for converting large usable areas of single crystalline silicon from a polycrystalline or an amorphous starting material. The present invention is intended to provide such a method, and is characterised by providing optical energy absorbing means in or on said support means adjacent to and around each of said areas, and providing thermal control means, associated with said optical energy absorbing means, in the region adjacent to and around each area, for affecting the amount of thermal energy absorbed in the region immediately adjacent to and around each area to compensate for preferential heat loss at the edges of each area, said thermal control means establishing a thermal gradient between the central portion of each area and the edges of each area for slowing the rate of cooling at said edges such that as said melted areas cool, each will crystallize from a single nucleation location and competitive nucleation locations at said edges will be suppressed, whereby each of said areas will be converted to a single crystal when cooled.

A method according to a particular embodiment of the invention includes the steps of depositing an array of islands, formed of an optical energy absorbing crystallizable semiconductor material upon an amorphous or non-epitaxial crystalline substrate; providing an optical energy absorbing material, capable of being heated by an optical energy heat source, on the substrate in the area surrounding the islands in the array; and providing a thermal control structure in the region surrounding the islands for affecting the amount of optical energy absorbed in the region immediately surrounding each island to compensate for preferential heat losses at the island edges during cooling to the substrate. Then projecting an optical energy source over each island and its surrounding area for melting regions of the island and heating the optical energy absorbing layer. When the optical energy source has passed, controlled cooling of the islands and the optical energy absorbing layer, by thermal drain into the substrate, takes place. Thus, under the influence of the thermal control structure, a differential thermal gradient is established between the central portion of each island and the edges of each island for slowing the rate of cooling at the edges such that as the islands cool each will be converted to a single crystal and the appearance of competing crystal nucleation sites at the edges will be suppressed.

Many of the attendant advantages and the mode of operation of this invention will become more readily appreciated as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings wherein:

Figure 1 shows in perspective view an array of crystallizable islands being scanned by an elongated laser spot in accordance with the instant invention;

Figure 2 is a front elevation view of the array of

Figure 1, taken substantially along line 2—2, showing the laser irradiating and melting a zone in a single island;

Figure 3 is a left side elevation view of the array of Figure 1, taken substantially along line 3—3, showing the laser irradiation zone extending laterally beyond a single island so as to act upon the surrounding material;

Figure 4 shows in perspective view a single island on which is superimposed in phantom lines the spatial profile of the optical intensity of the laser spot.

Figure 5 is a side elevation view of an island upon a substrate, wherein the thermal control structure of this invention has not been incorporated, showing thermal losses to the substrate during cooling as represented by arrows whose length and direction generally indicate the velocity of heat loss;

Figure 6 is a side elevation view of a crystallizable island upon a substrate, showing tuning layers comprising one form of the thermal control structure of this invention and arrows indicating relative thermal losses to the substrate during cooling;

Figure 7 is a side elevation view similar to Figure 6 showing a moat and sea arrangement comprising another form of the thermal control structure of this invention;

Figure 8 shows in perspective view a single island with a sweeping molten zone and a single nucleation site at the center of its leading edge from which the crystallization front radiates;

Figure 9 shows in perspective view similar to Figure 8 an alternative embodiment of island shape for enhanced control of nucleation;

Figure 10 shows in perspective view the embodiment of Figure 7 including a moat and sea surrounding the single island, and also showing the single nucleation site, crystallization front and sweeping molten zone;

Figure 11 shows in perspective view a modification of the Figure 10 embodiment showing a variation of the moat configuration for enhanced control of nucleation;

Figure 12 is a perspective view of a single island on which is superimposed in phantom lines a profile of the optical intensity of a laser spot which heats the entire island and its immediate surround, simultaneously;

Figure 13 shows in perspective view a single island shaped for enhanced control of nucleation when heating is accomplished in the manner of Figure 12;

Figure 14 is an elevation view of still another embodiment of this invention showing an encapsulating layer in conjunction with the tuning layer configuration; and

Figure 15 is an elevation view of yet another embodiment of this invention showing an encapsulating layer in conjunction with the moat and sea configuration.

Turning now to the drawings, in greater detail, there is shown in Figure 1 an array of silicon islands 10 disposed upon a suitable substrate 12.

As deposited, the islands are in the amorphous or fine grain polycrystalline form. By the term island we mean, of course, a prepositioned pattern of areas to be converted. For example, a stripe is to be considered an island whose length to width ratio is exceedingly large. After being irradiated by sweeping laser beam 14, moving in the direction of the arrow, each island is converted to a single crystal. An optical system (not shown) has been interposed between the laser source and the target to change the shape of the beam so that the laser "spot" 16 upon the target will be elongated, substantially as shown. A suitable scanning mechanism (also not shown) moves the "spot", relative to the island, in the direction of its short dimension, which is selected to be less than the island length in the direction of scan for incremental or zone heating of the island, while the long dimension is selected to exceed the island width for irradiating the immediately surrounding area 18 in order to accomplish the results of the instant invention. As it is desired to convert the islands into single crystalline material we have found that accurate heating and cooling of the islands 10 and its immediate surround 18 is important.

In Figure 2, laser irradiation of the island is shown to be sufficiently intense to form a molten zone 19 within the island whose upper surface is seen to be convex. In the upstream area 20, the cooled crystallized portion of the island is slightly thinner than the downstream area 21 because of the mass transport of material in the molten zone. Upon the passage of the laser spot and complete crystallization of the island, the surface will be slightly rippled and a small ridge of transported material will reside at its end.

An intensity profile of the laser spot, as shown in schematic perspective in Figure 4, is seen to have a distribution 22 which falls off rapidly in the direction of laser travel and is effectively uniform normal to the direction of laser travel.

As the scanning laser spot moves, the mechanism of cooling occurs sequentially from the leading island edge onward. Thermal energy, accumulated in the island 10 is lost to the cooler substrate. Lateral heat flow, which is negligible in all the thin layers, occurs within the substrate which is sufficiently thick to allow this phenomenon. We have shown in Figures 5, 6 and 7 schematic representations of thermal energy loss to the substrate from the laser heated areas, under several conditions. These illustrations provide an explanation of the instant invention.

In Figure 5, an island of amorphous or polycrystalline semiconductor 10, such as silicon or germanium, which are known to absorb optical energy, is disposed upon a substrate, such as glass, which is not optical energy absorbing. The island will be subject to optical energy irradiation from a scanning or pulsed laser, an infra-red source, a flash lamp or from any other suitable means with irradiation taking place in the zone between the dotted lines. Only the island will be heated, the exposed portions of the glass substrate surrounding the island will not absorb

optical energy and will remain cool. Thus, when cooling of the island occurs, as shown by the arrows, the central portion of the island loses its heat directly into the glass substrate while the edge portions of the island lose heat more rapidly as thermal energy passes both downwardly and laterally outwardly into the cool substrate.

This heat flow pattern will result in cooler island edges at which plural nucleation location will be established. As shown in Figure 4, a sweeping laser spot will leave the leading edge of the island cooler than the lateral edges. Thus, desirably, nucleation will be initiated at the leading edge and crystal growth will extend therefrom. However, in the Figure 5 situation nucleation can also be initiated at the lateral edges. Thus, competing crystallization fronts can radiate from several nucleation locations, resulting in a polycrystalline island.

In order to suppress competing nucleation between that desired at the lead edge and that undesired at the lateral edges, we have determined that by elevating the temperature of the surrounding area, heat flow from the island lateral edges into the substrate may be accurately controlled to the extent necessary to suppress edge nucleation. By providing an optical energy absorbing layer upon the glass substrate and irradiating this composite structure with a suitable optical energy source, the island surround also will be heated. If an optical energy absorbing substrate is used, the uppermost portion thereof functions as if it were a separate optical energy absorbing layer. Thermal losses to the substrate in the vicinity of the island edges will be additive, including heat from both the surround and the island edges.

Thus, the substrate will be hotter in the region of the lateral edges, resulting in a reduced rate of heat loss from the edges as compared to the central portion of the island. By controlling the amount of thermal input into the surrounding area, thermal loss to the substrate and the probability of edge nucleation can be controlled.

For example, in the thermal control embodiment of Figure 6 an optical energy absorbing layer 23 has been deposited upon a non-absorbing substrate 24. A pair of thin dielectric tuning layers 26 and 28 overlay absorbing layer 23 for controlling (tuning) the amount of thermal input into the absorbing layer. When the heat source has been removed and the system cools, heat will flow downwardly, as shown, to the cooler substrate directly below the central portion of the island. But, at the lateral island edges, where the surround 18 has also been heated, the optical absorbing layer 23 also seeks to lose heat to the cooler substrate below the island. Thus, there are additive contributions of heat flow to the substrate in this area. The shorter diagonal arrows represent a slower resultant rate of heat loss at island edges than at the island center. In other words, a controlled thermal gradient exists between the central portion of the island and the lateral edges thereof.

Another thermal control embodiment is suggested in Figure 7 wherein a moat 30 (absence of

optical energy absorbing layer) and a sea 32 (existence of optical energy absorbing layer) surround each island. Only one island is shown, but it is to be understood that each island is so surrounded. As in Figures 5 and 6, a suitable optical energy source had been projected upon the island 10 and its immediate surrounding area 18 (as shown by the dotted lines) to heat the optical absorbing layers, namely, the island and the sea. The substrate is not optically absorbing and, therefore, in the area of the moat it will remain relatively cool. The heated sea and the heated island edge areas combine to lose their accumulated heat to the cooler substrate in the moat area. Thus, the island edges will be warmer and the thermal gradient between the island edges and their associated substrate will be smaller than the similar situation without a thermal control structure (as in Figure 5). The resultant slower edge cooling (warmer edge area) suppresses the formation of nucleation locations at the edges.

The key to success in growing large area single crystal islands on a suitable substrate has been found to be a combination of suppression of competitive nucleation as described, and enhanced control of nucleation and growth from a single seed.

In Figures 8—11 single crystal growth is shown in several embodiments. Lateral thermal flow according to that described with regard to Figure 6 takes place in the embodiments of Figures 8 and 9 while lateral thermal flow as shown in Figure 7 takes place in the Figures 10 and 11 embodiments. In each, laser scanning takes place with a laser spot substantially as shown at 14 in Figure 1, having an optical profile as shown at 22 in Figure 4.

In Figure 8 the scanning laser spot moving over the island and its surrounding area, zone melts the island as shown at 19. It should be noted that the molten zone is seen to flare outwardly at the lateral edges due to the increased heat thereat. As the molten zone passes the island leading edge, its trailing edge will cool first and crystallization will begin. A nucleation site 34 will form, from which a crystallization front 36 radiates. We have found that although plural crystallization sites 35 are sometimes present on the leading edge one site generally establishes a dominant front. As fully explained above it is the intent of this invention to support a single crystallization front while suppressing competitive nucleation sites at the lateral island edges. This has been accomplished by reducing the rate of thermal flow from the edges, thereby maintaining the edges hot enough to prevent spontaneous nucleation. An improved island configuration 10' is shown in Figure 9 wherein a tapered shape at the leading edge enhances self-speeding from a single point 38. This substantially eliminates the possibility of plural nucleation sites at the leading edge.

In Figures 10 and 11 the moat configuration is shown in perspective for a better visual understanding of the system. Both figures illustrate

nucleation of a single crystal and the crystal front propagating therefrom. In Figure 10 a rectangular moat 30 encircles a rectangular island. Leading edge nucleation occurs in a manner similar to that described with reference to Figure 8. In Figure 11 the moat has been tapered at 40 in advance of the island leading edge to enhance cooling at the center of the island leading edge.

While describing the heating process of this invention as one of zone melting, it should be understood that our invention also comprehends heating the entire island and its immediate surrounding area, or plural islands and their surround, with a single, pulsed, large optical energy source. The mechanism of seeding and crystal growth described above also will be carried out in this form of the invention. Figures 12 and 13 are of note with respect to this means of heating. In Figure 12, the optical intensity profile of a large area laser pulse is shown in phantom lines at 39 as being effectively uniform over the island 10 and falling off rapidly in the surround. Figure 13 illustrates an example of another island configuration 10" disposed upon a single dielectric thermal control layer, wherein the surround is hotter than the island under uniform illumination. In this mode, the interior point 42 will be heated less than the other exterior island points and will act as the nucleation center.

Now that the physical principles have been set forth, several examples of the parameters and materials utilized in our experiments shall be described. In the Figure 8 configuration, the substrate 24 was made of silica (SiO_2) a non-optical energy absorbing material upon which was disposed an optical absorbing layer 23 comprising a 1 μm CVD deposited polysilicon which in turn supported an 88 nm thermally grown dielectric oxide layer 26 over which was added a second thin dielectric layer comprising 64 nm of CVD deposited silicon nitride (Si_3N_4). Islands 10 of 0.5 μm thick CVD deposited polysilicon (also optical energy absorbing) over the nitride layer were photolithographically produced. A CW argon ion laser having a wavelength of 514.5 nm (5145 Å) was formed into a collimated elliptical beam (with a ratio of diameters equal to three) and focused to a spot approximately 30 $\mu\text{m} \times 90 \mu\text{m}$. This spot was scanned in a direction normal to its wide dimension at 1 cm/sec over the central axes of the deposited islands so that the islands achieved a melting temperature of 1412°C. After laser scanning, the islands were studied in a TEM where it was observed that islands 20 μm wide by 20 μm long with no grain boundaries were present. We also observed the black body radiation from the laser heated area during annealing to confirm our analysis of the thermal control mechanism.

In order to optimally control the thermal input to the polysilicon optical absorbing layer and then to the island edges, as explained above, we have experimented with a dual dielectric (SiO_2 and Si_3N_4) overcoating of various thicknesses and therefore various reflectivities to obtain the optimal thermal tuning. Since the area surrounding

the island is reflectively coated and the polysilicon island is uncoated, the surround will absorb less thermal energy than the island. We have also experimented with a single dielectric layer upon the optical absorbing layer, namely, the 88 nm oxide layer alone but as this configuration is maximally absorbing (nonreflecting) the surround absorbs more optical energy than the uncoated islands resulting in a net heat influx to the islands. Edge heating in this instance appears to be undesirably strong. Although this single dielectric embodiment will yield the desired results it is not altogether satisfactory to maximize the lateral edge thermal profile because substrate damage due to extreme heating is possible. Since we seek to obtain the desired results with minimum heating of the substrate the dual dielectric tuning has been found to be preferable.

The configuration of Figures 10 and 11 is much simpler from a processing point of view. During fabrication of the fine grain polysilicon islands, instead of photolithographically stripping away the entire surrounding material between islands, only a moat 30 is removed. We have found that a moat of approximately 4 μm wide will be satisfactory. The thermal flow dynamics of this configuration have already been described. Suffice it to state that the moat is considered to be a control structure which provides an unheated zone in the nonabsorbing substrate which accepts heat from both the sea and from the island perimeter. This thermal addition moderates rapid heat loss from the island perimeter and slows formation of nucleation centers. After the laser annealing process has been completed, the surrounding sea material may be removed for device processing, or partially left as laser annealed coarse grained polysilicon connectors.

In Figures 14 and 15 we suggest the solution to a further problem, namely, that of retaining a smooth top surface on the islands after laser induced melting and recrystallization. The effects of surface tension and mass transport during melting have been observed to produce substantial thickness variations. For example, for the slow laser scan described (i.e. 1 cm/sec) the molten zone in a bare island is a convex, surface tension determined, ridge (see 19 in Figure 2). Further, shock driven ripples quench into the solidifying topography and mass transport occurs to the trailing edge of the island. We have found that an encapsulating layer 43 retains the smooth upper surface of the island after laser annealing by preventing the surface deformation effects. In Figure 14 a dielectric thin film such as SiO_2 or Si_3N_4 , approximately 20 nm thick deposited over the amorphous or polycrystalline silicon islands and the area surrounding the islands will serve the dual function of encapsulation for topographic integrity and control of thermal energy acceptance by the optical absorbing material 23 in conjunction with a first dielectric layer 26 upon which it is deposited. Also, the single dielectric layer over the island will enhance the transmission of optical energy into the island (thus

requiring less incident energy) and, because the dielectric melts at a higher temperature than silicon it will also suppress island ablation. Thus, the molten region can be forced to a higher temperature to improve crystal growth. In Figure 15, the dielectric overlayer 44 is combined with the sea and moat embodiment to perform the same enhancing results described with reference to Figure 14.

Claims

1. A method of converting predefined areas (10) of semiconductor material on a support means (12; 24) into single crystal areas comprising the steps of heating each area with an optical energy source so as to melt the semiconductor material, and allowing the molten semiconductor material to cool and crystallise, the method being characterised by providing optical energy absorbing means (23; 32) in or on said support means adjacent to and around each of said areas, and providing thermal control means (26; 28; 30), associated with said optical energy absorbing means, in the region adjacent to and around each area, for affecting the amount of thermal energy absorbed in the region immediately adjacent to and around each area to compensate for preferential heat loss at the edges of each area, said thermal control means establishing a thermal gradient between the central portion of each area and the edges of each area for slowing the rate of cooling at said edges such that as said melted areas cool, each will crystallize from a single nucleation location and competitive nucleation locations at said edges will be suppressed, whereby each of said areas will be converted to a single crystal when cooled.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the heating step includes projecting a laser spot (16) and imparting relative motion between said spot and said area, said spot being elongated such that its short dimension is less than the dimension of each area in the direction of relative movement and its long dimension is greater than the dimension of each area transversely of the direction of relative movement (Fig. 1).

3. The method of claim 1 or claim 2 wherein said step of providing thermal control means comprises depositing one or more dielectric layers (26; 28) upon said optical energy absorbing layer (23) which affect the amount of absorbed optical energy by selective reflection or transmission of said energy.

4. The method of claim 2 including providing an array of chevron shaped islands (10') having tapered leading edges whose apexes are first crossed by said scanning elongated laser spot (Fig. 9).

5. The method of claim 2 including providing as said support means an amorphous substrate (24) which does not absorb optical energy, providing said optical energy absorbing means by depositing an amorphous or polycrystalline silicon optical energy absorbing layer (23) on said sub-

strate, providing said thermal control means by depositing a first dielectric layer (26) of silicon dioxide on said optical energy absorbing layer and depositing a second dielectric layer (28) of silicon nitride on said oxide layer, and providing said areas (10) of semiconductor material by depositing an array of amorphous or polycrystalline silicon islands on said silicon nitride layer.

6. The method of any one of claims 1 to 5 wherein said step of providing thermal control means comprises forming a moat (30) immediately adjacent to and around each area.

7. The method of claim 6 including removing a tapering region of material in advance of that edge of each area which is first crossed by said scanning elongated laser spot (Fig. 11).

8. The method of any one of claims 1 to 4 including the step of encapsulating each of said areas by depositing over it a dielectric layer (43, 44) for maintaining the upper surface of each area smooth after it has recrystallized from the melt.

9. The method of claim 2 including providing as said support means an amorphous substrate (24) which does not absorb optical energy, providing said optical energy absorbing means (23) by depositing an amorphous or polycrystalline silicon optical energy absorbing layer on said substrate, providing said thermal control means by first depositing a first dielectric layer of silicon dioxide (26) on said optical energy absorbing layer, providing said areas (10) of semiconductor material by depositing a pattern of amorphous or polycrystalline silicon islands on said first dielectric layer, and depositing a second dielectric layer of silicon nitride (43) over said islands and over said first dielectric layer, the portion of said second dielectric layer overlying said first dielectric layer forming a portion of said thermal control means (Fig. 14).

10. The method of claim 2 including providing as said support means an amorphous substrate (24) which does not absorb optical energy, providing said optical energy absorbing means by depositing an amorphous or polycrystalline silicon optical energy absorbing layer (32) on said substrate, providing said thermal control means by first removing portions of said layer in a pattern so as to define islands (10) with moats (30) therearound in a sea of optical energy absorbing material, and then depositing a dielectric overlayer (44) of silicon nitride on said sea, said moat and said islands (Fig. 15).

Patentansprüche

1. Verfahren zur Umwandlung vorbestimmter Bereiche (10) eines Halbleitermaterials auf einer Trägereinrichtung in Einzelkristallbereiche, wobei jeder Bereich mit einer optischen Energiequelle aufgeheizt wird, um das Halbleitermaterial zu schmelzen und wobei dann das geschmolzene Halbleitermaterial kühlt und kristallisiert, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine optische Energie absorbierende Einrichtung (23; 32) in oder auf die Trägereinrichtung angrenzend an und um jeden

dieser Bereiche herum angebracht wird und daß eine thermische Regeleinrichtung (26, 28; 30), die der optischen Energieabsorbereinrichtung zugeordnet ist, in einem Bereich angrenzend und um jeden Bereich herum vorgesehen wird, um die absorbierte thermische Energiemenge in dem Bereich unmittelbar angrenzend an und um jeden dieser Bereiche herum beeinflussen zu können, so daß an den Randbereichen jedes dieser Bereiche die dort auftretenden Wärmeverluste kompensiert werden können, wobei die thermische Regeleinrichtung einen Wärmegradienten zwischen den zentralen Abschnitt eines jeden Bereiches und den Kanten eines jeden Bereiches herbeiführt, so daß die Abkühlgeschwindigkeit an diesen Kanten derart verlangsamt wird, daß dann, wenn die geschmolzenen Bereiche abkühlen, jeder Bereich von einem einzelnen Kristallisationskern aus kristallisiert und weitere Keimzentren an den Kanten unterdrückt werden, wodurch jeder Bereich beim Abkühlen zu einem Einzelkristall wird.

2. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1, wobei das Aufwärmen die Projektion eines Laserlichtpunktes (16) und eine Relativbewegung zwischen dem Laserlichtpunkt und den Bereichen umfaßt, wobei der Lichtpunkt länglich geformt ist, so daß seine kurze Abmessung geringer als die Dimension eines jeden Bereiches in Richtung der Relativbewegung wird und wobei die Längenabmessung größer als die Ausmaße jeden Bereichs quer zu der Relativbewegungsrichtung sind (Fig. 1).

3. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, wobei der Schritt zur Erzeugung der thermischen Regeleinrichtung umfaßt, daß ein oder mehrere dielektrische Schichten (26, 28) auf diese optische Energie absorbierende Schicht (23) aufgetragen werden, was den Anteil der absorbierten optischen Energie durch selektive Reflexion oder durch selektives Hindurchlassen dieser Energie beeinflusst.

4. Verfahren nach Anspruch 2, wobei eine Reihe von chevronförmigen Inseln mit zulaufenden Vorderkanten ausgebildet wird, deren Scheitelpunkte als erstes von den länglichen abstastenden Laserlichtpunkt gekreuzt werden (Fig. 9).

5. Verfahren nach Anspruch 2, wobei auf der Trägereinrichtung ein amorphes Substrat (24) aufgebracht wird, welches keine optische Energie absorbiert und wobei die Einrichtung, die die optische Energie absorbiert, durch Abscheiden einer amorphen oder mehrkristallinen optische Energie absorbierende Silikonschicht (23) auf dem Substrat erzeugt wird, und wobei die thermische Regeleinrichtung durch Aufbringen einer ersten dielektrischen Schicht (26) aus Siliziumdioxid auf der optische Energie absorbierenden Schicht und durch Auftragen einer zweiten dielektrischen Schicht (28) aus Siliziumnitrid auf der Oxidschicht erzeugt wird und wobei die Bereiche des Halbleitermaterials durch Aufbringen einer Reihe von amorphen oder polykristallinen Silikoninseln auf der Silikonitridschicht gebildet werden.

6. Verfahren nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 1

bis 5, wobei bei der Erzeugung der thermischen Regeleinrichtung ein Graben (30) unmittelbar angrenzend an und um jeden Bereich herum ausgebildet wird.

7. Verfahren nach Anspruch 6, wobei in dem zulaufenden Bereich vor der Kante jeden Bereiches, die zuerst von dem abtastenden länglichen Laserlichtpunkt gekreuzt wird, Material entfernt wird (Fig. 11).

8. Verfahren nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, wobei jeder dieser Bereiche durch Ablagerung einer dielektrischen Schicht (42, 44) eingekapselt wird, um die Oberfläche jeden Bereiches glatt zu halten, nachdem er aus der Schmelze rekristallisiert.

9. Verfahren nach Anspruch 2, wobei als Trägereinrichtung ein amorphes Substrat (24) vorgesehen wird, welches optische Energie nicht absorbiert, wobei die die optische energieabsorbierende Einrichtung (23) durch Aufbringen einer amorphen oder polykristallinen Siliziumschicht, die optische Energie absorbiert, auf dem Substrat erzeugt wird, wobei die thermische Regeleinrichtung dadurch erzeugt wird, daß zunächst eine erste dielektrische Schicht aus Siliziumdioxid (26) auf der die optische Energie absorbierenden Schicht abgelagert wird und wobei dann die Bereiche (10) des Halbleitermaterials durch Ablagerung eines Musters aus amorphen oder polykristallinen Siliziuminseln auf der ersten Schicht erzeugt werden und wobei dann eine zweite dielektrische Schicht aus Siliziumnitrid (43) über die Inseln und über die erste dielektrische Schicht gelegt wird, wobei die zweite elektrische Schicht, die über der ersten dielektrischen Schicht liegt, einen Teil der thermischen Regeleinrichtung darstellt (Fig. 14).

10. Verfahren nach Anspruch 2, wobei zur Erzeugung der Trägereinrichtung ein amorphes Substrat (24) eingesetzt wird, welches optische Energie nicht absorbiert, wobei die die optische Energie absorbierende Einrichtung durch Ablagern einer amorphen oder polykristallinen Siliziumschicht (32) die optische Energie absorbiert, auf dem Substrat erzeugt wird, und wobei die thermische Regeleinrichtung dadurch erhalten wird, daß zuerst Teile aus der Schicht in einem Muster so entfernt werden, daß Inseln (10) mit Gräben (30) darum herum in einem Meer von optische Energie absorbierendem Material entsteht und wobei dann eine dielektrische Überzugsschicht (44) aus Silikonitrid auf diesem Meer, dem Graben und den Inseln abgelagert wird (Figur 15).

Revendications

1. Procédé de transformation de zones pré-définies (10) d'un matériau semi-conducteur sur un moyen de support (12, 24) en zones monocristallines comprenant les étapes consistant à chauffer chaque zone avec une source d'énergie optique de façon à fondre le matériau semi-conducteur, et à permettre au matériau semi-conducteur fondu de se refroidir et se cristalliser,

le procédé étant caractérisé en ce qu'il prévoit un moyen d'absorption de l'énergie optique (23; 32) à l'intérieur ou au-dessus du moyen de support contigu à et entourant chacune des zones, et en ce qu'il prévoit un moyen d'absorption d'énergie optique, dans la région contiguë à et entourant chaque zone, afin d'affecter la quantité d'énergie thermique absorbée dans la région immédiatement contiguë à et entourant chaque zone de manière à compenser la perte de chaleur préférentielle aux bords de chaque zone, le moyen de contrôle thermique établissant un gradient thermique entre la partie centrale de chaque zone et les bords de chaque zone afin de ralentir le taux de refroidissement aux bords pour que, pendant le refroidissement des zones fondues, chacune se cristallise à partir d'un emplacement unique de nucléation et les emplacements compétitifs de nucléation aux bords seront supprimés, d'où il résulte que chacune des zones sera transformée en monocristal lorsqu'elle est refroidie.

2. Procédé selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'étape de chauffage consiste à projeter un spot laser (16) et à conférer un mouvement relatif entre le spot et les zones, le spot étant allongé de sorte que sa petite cote est inférieure à la cote de chaque zone dans le sens du mouvement relatif et sa grande cote est supérieure à la cote de chaque zone transversalement au sens du mouvement relatif (figure 1).

3. Procédé selon la revendication 1 ou la revendication 2, dans lequel l'étape consistant à prévoir un moyen de contrôle thermique comprend le dépôt d'une ou de plusieurs couches diélectriques (26, 28) sur la couche absorbant l'énergie optique (23) qui affectent la quantité d'énergie optique absorbée par réflexion ou transmission sélectives de ladite énergie.

4. Procédé selon la revendication 2, comprenant la fourniture d'un réseau d'îles en forme de chevrons (10') comportant des bords avant chanfreinés dont les sommets sont tout d'abord traversés par le spot laser allongé de balayage (figure 9).

5. Procédé selon la revendication 2, comprenant la fourniture à titre de moyen de support d'un substrat amorphe (24) qui n'absorbe pas l'énergie optique, la fourniture d'un moyen d'absorption d'énergie optique par dépôt d'une couche absorbant l'énergie optique en silicium amorphe ou polycristallin (23) sur le substrat, la fourniture d'un moyen de contrôle thermique par dépôt d'une première couche diélectrique (26) de bioxyde de silicium sur la couche absorbant l'énergie optique et le dépôt d'une seconde couche diélectrique (28) en nitrure de silicium sur la couche en oxyde et la fourniture de la zone (10) en matériau semi-conducteur par dépôt d'un réseau d'îles en silicium amorphe ou polycristallin sur la couche de nitrure de silicium.

6. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, dans lequel l'étape de fourniture d'un moyen de contrôle thermique comprend la formation d'une fosse (30) en un endroit

immédiatement contigu, en l'entourant, à chaque zone.

7. Procédé selon la revendication 6, comprenant l'enlèvement d'une région chanfreinée de matériau en avant du bord du chaque zone qui est tout d'abord traversée par le spot laser allongé de balayage (figure 11).

8. Procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, comprenant l'étape d'enrobage de chacune des zones par dépôt sur son dessus d'une couche diélectrique (43, 44) afin de maintenir la surface supérieure de chaque zone à l'état lisse après sa recristallisation à partir du mélange à l'état fondu.

9. Procédé selon la revendication 2, comprenant la fourniture, à titre de moyen de support, d'un substrat amorphe (24) qui n'absorbe pas l'énergie optique, la fourniture du moyen (23) absorbant l'énergie optique par dépôt sur le substrat d'une couche absorbant l'énergie optique en silicium amorphe ou polycristallin, la fourniture du moyen de contrôle thermique par dépôt en premier lieu d'une première couche diélectrique de bioxyde de silicium (26) sur le moyen absorbant

l'énergie optique, la fourniture de zones (10) de matériau semi-conducteur par dépôt d'une configuration d'îles en silicium amorphe ou polycristallin sur la première couche diélectrique, et le dépôt d'une seconde couche diélectrique de nitrure de silicium (43) sur les îles et sur la première couche diélectrique, la partie de la seconde couche diélectrique recouvrant la première couche diélectrique constituant une partie du moyen de contrôle thermique (figure 14).

10. Procédé selon la revendication 2, comprenant la fourniture, à titre de moyen de support, d'un substrat amorphe (24) qui n'absorbe pas l'énergie optique, la fourniture du moyen absorbant l'énergie optique par dépôt d'une couche (32) absorbant l'énergie optique en silicium amorphe ou polycristallin sur le substrat, la fourniture du moyen de contrôle thermique en enlevant d'abord des parties de la couche dans un motif de manière à définir des îles (10) avec des fosses (30) les entourant dans une mer du matériau absorbant l'énergie optique, puis le dépôt d'une couche diélectrique (44) en nitrure de silicium sur la mer, la fosse et les îles (figure 15).

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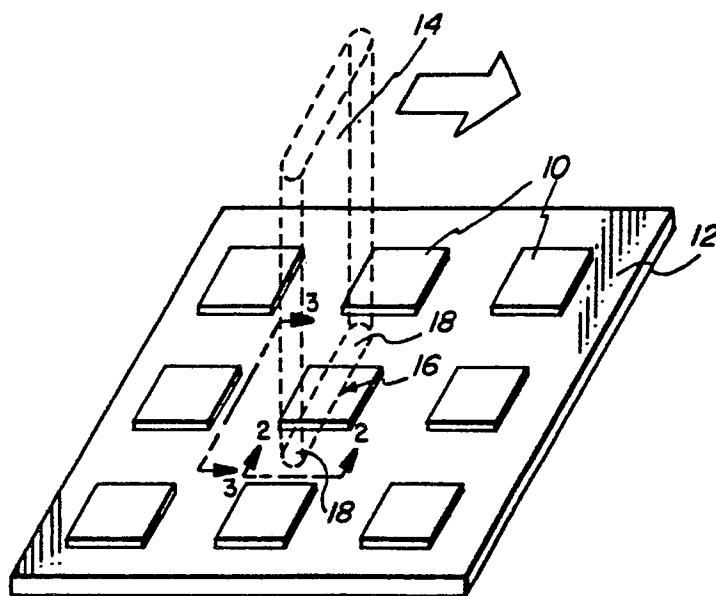


FIG. 1

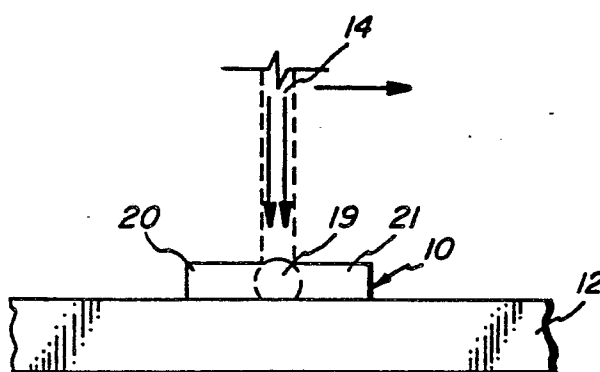


FIG. 2

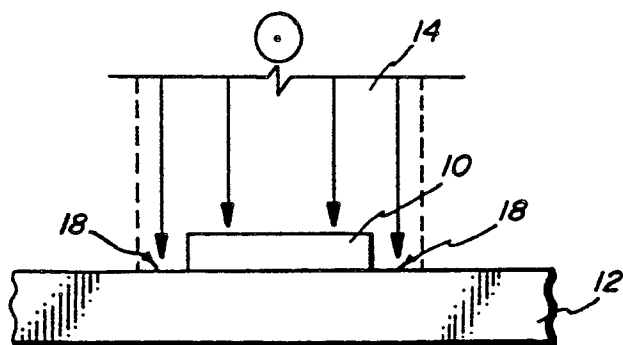


FIG. 3

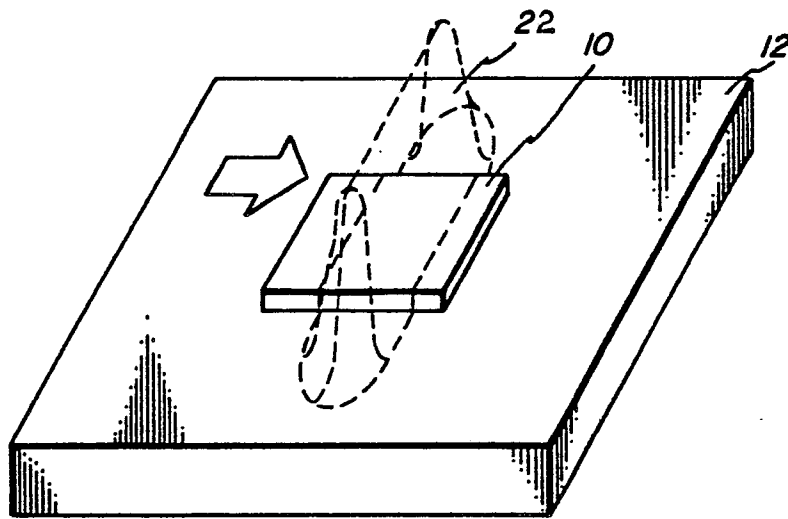


FIG. 4

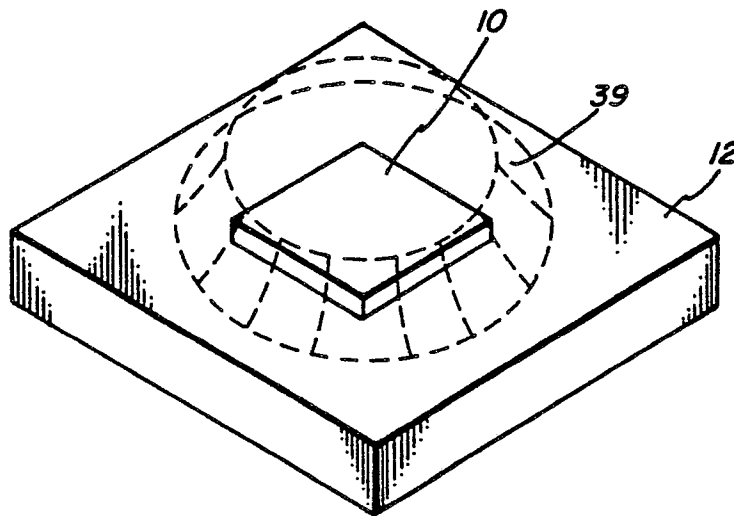


FIG. 12

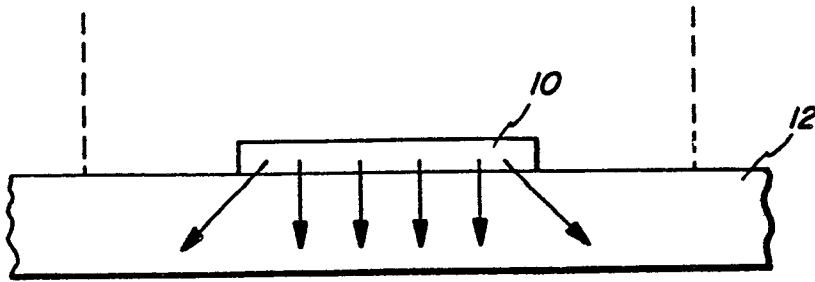


FIG. 5

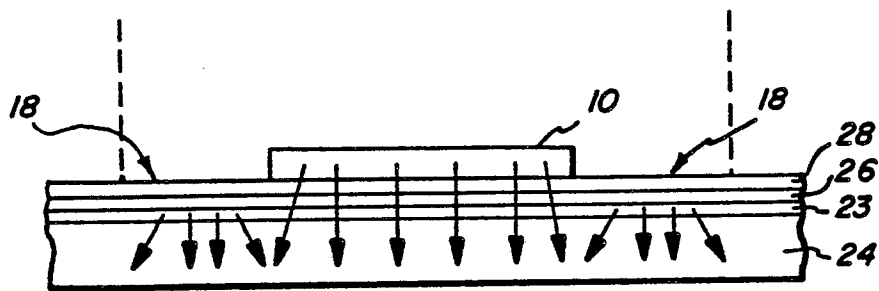


FIG. 6

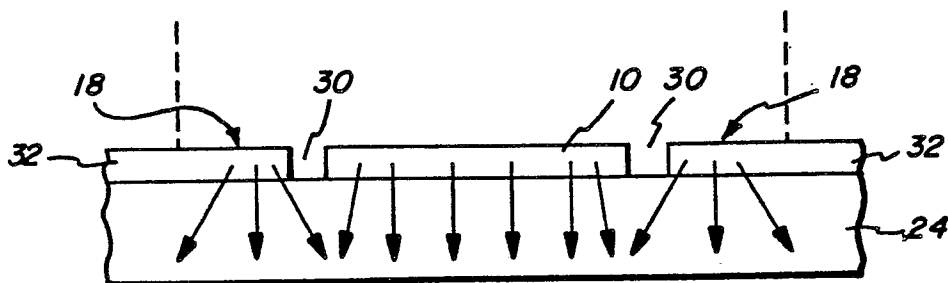


FIG. 7

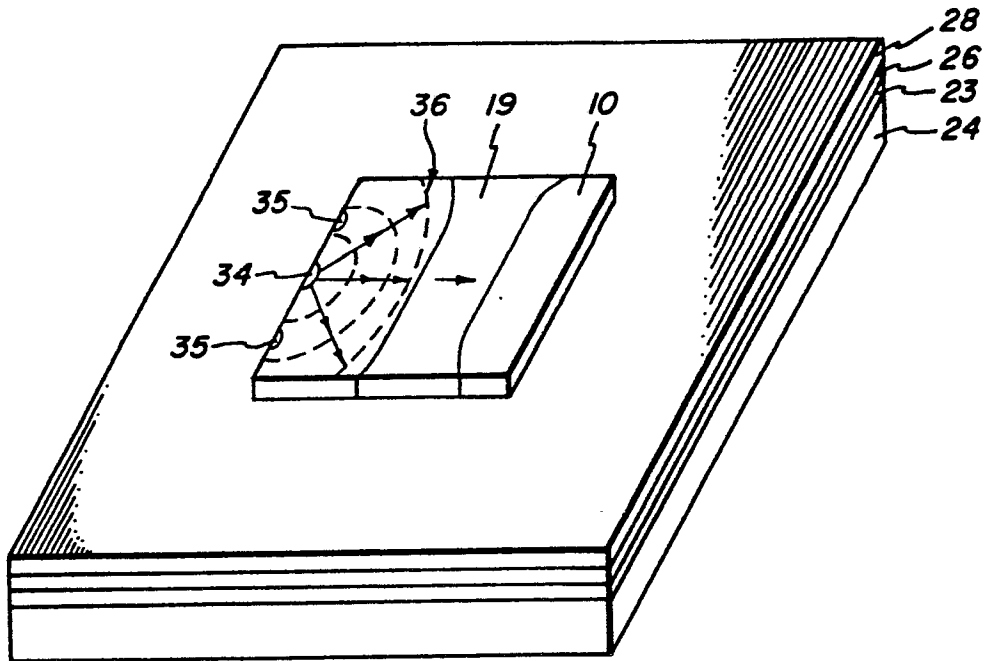


FIG. 8

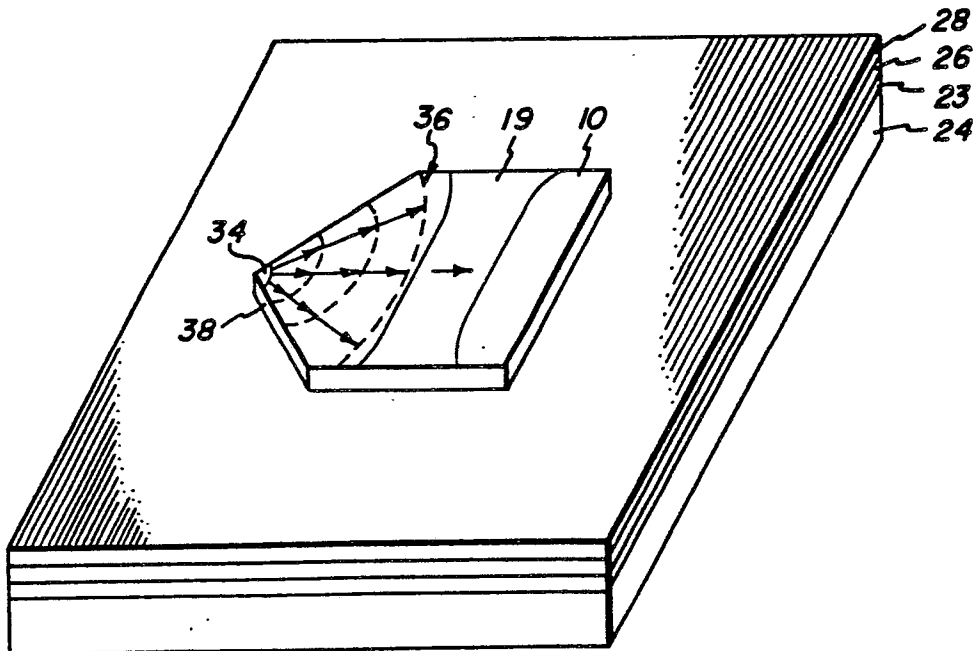


FIG. 9

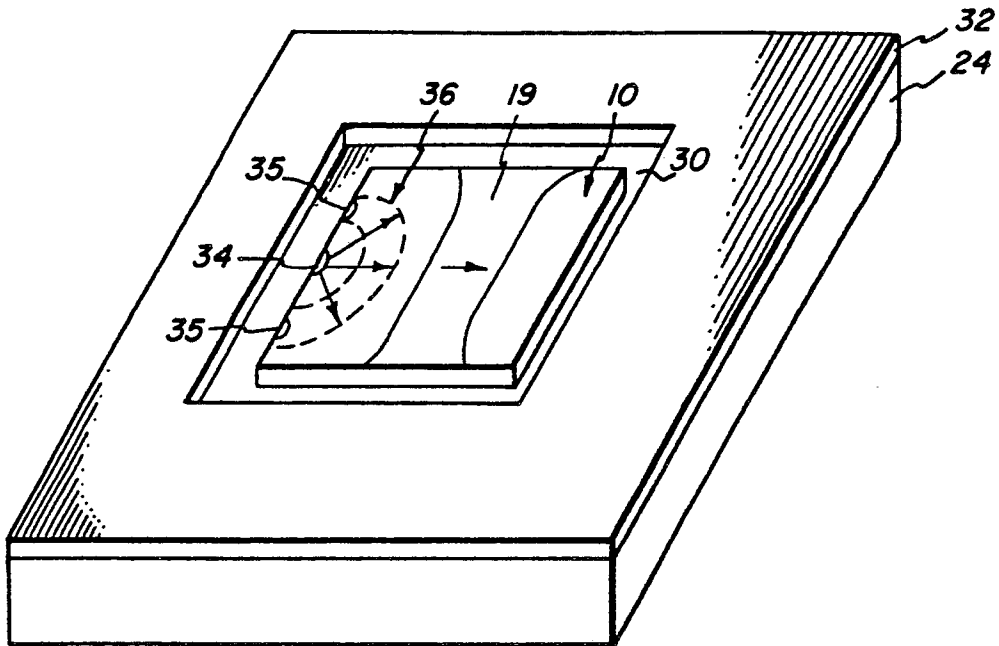


FIG. 10

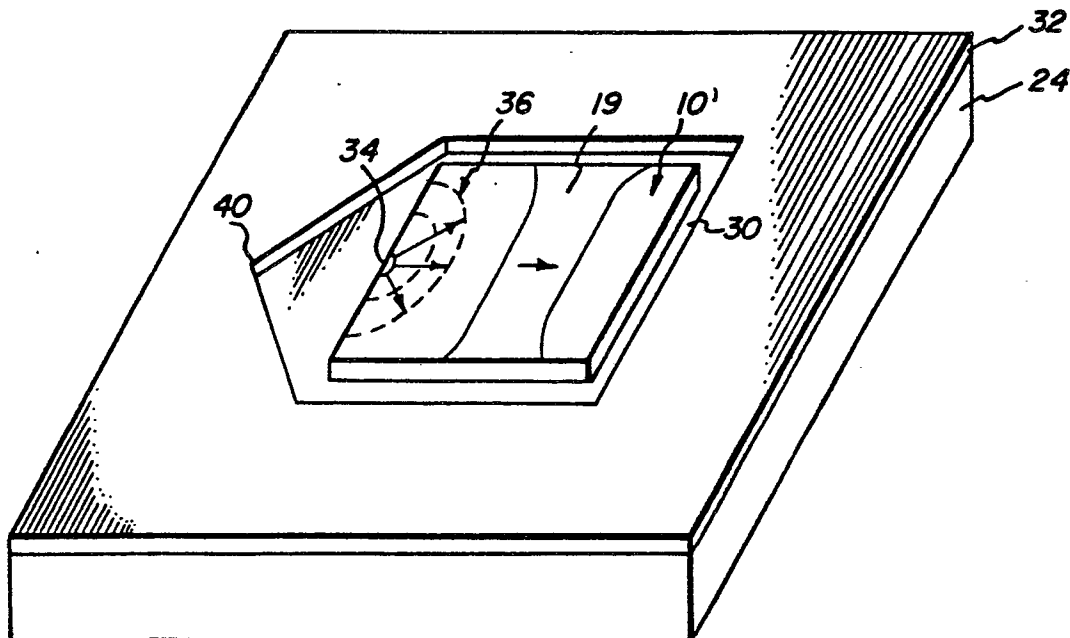


FIG. 11

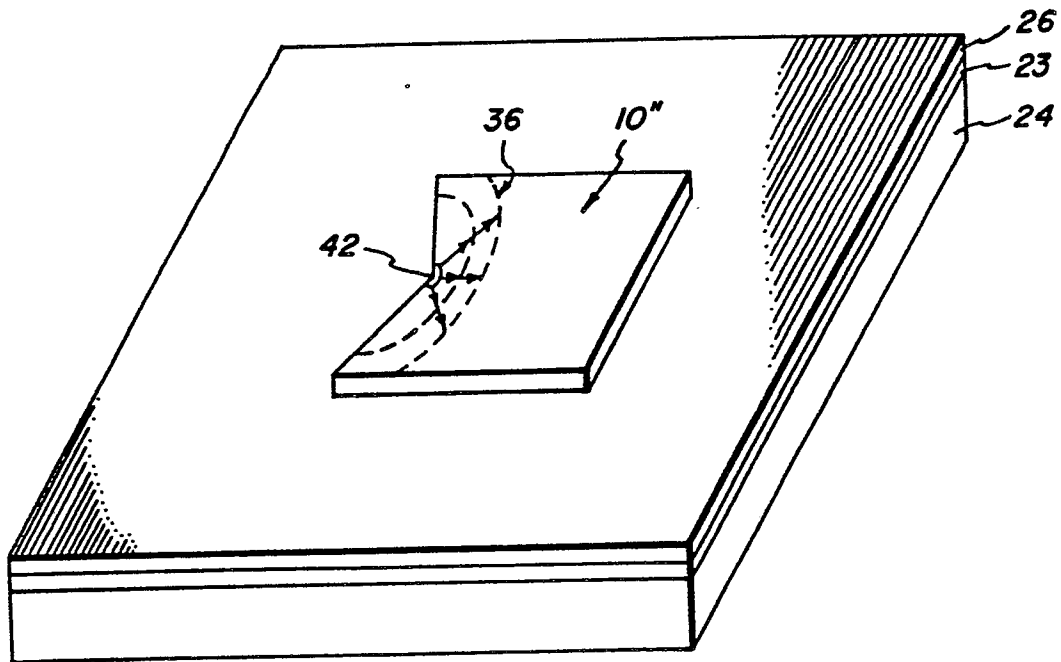


FIG. 13

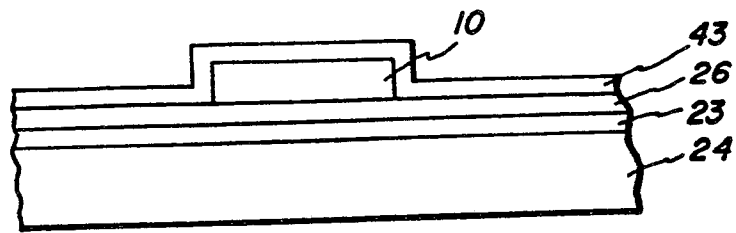


FIG. 14

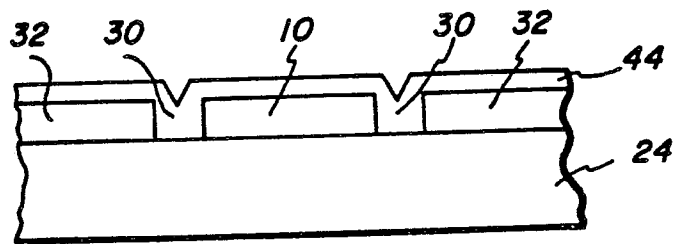


FIG. 15